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to perform the tasks he requires of it, although they do suggest that Spenser regarded his own culture as having fallen away from this ideal which he found so desirable. On the contrary, the description of the Beast's ravages is a testimony to the power of the virtue that can overcome it, and to the attractiveness of the society in which it is subdued. It is impossible on earth to destroy the Beast, but the force of the unifying principles Calidore discovers embodied in a culture reflecting the divine order may contain it, and with diligence, keep it contained. And it is an attainment to that culture that the Book of Courtesy requires.

George Lillo and "Speculative Masonry"*

By Harry William Pedicord
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Critical opinion in the twentieth century has been at a loss to account for the spectacular success and longevity of George Lillo's second play, *George Barnwell; or, The London Merchant* (Drury Lane, 22 June 1731). Allardyce Nicoll remarked that ". . . Reading it now, we cannot divine at first what precisely it was which so affected contemporary writers and writers of the succeeding half century. . . ."[1] Bonamy Dobrée declared that ". . . *George Barnwell* is the most important of Lillo's plays, even though to us it seems sheer melodrama . . . offering an appeal to sympathy if not to Augustan Pity. . . ."[2] William H. McBurney, the play's most recent editor, insists that "If the early publishing history of *The London Merchant* reflects the popularity of the play, its stage success was even more marked and remains one of the most interesting phenomena in eighteenth-century theatrical annals. . . ."[3]

No other major drama of its time was launched under such heavy odds and yet triumphed on its own throughout the century. *The London Merchant* was produced by Theophilus Cibber in his summer season at Drury Lane on 22 June 1731 and achieved a run of seventeen performances. Two subsequent performances were given at the fair booths before the fall season began.[4] Cibber, Jr., explained it this way: ". . . As this was almost a new species of tragedy, wrote on a very uncommon subject, he [Lillo] rather chose it should take its fate in the summer, than run the more hazardous fate of encountering the winter critics. . . ."[5] Cibber,

* This article was first published in a German translation in *Kleine Schriften*, No. 26 (Berlin, 1973) and is reprinted in the original English with the kind permission of the Gesellschaft für Theatergeschichte.

[1] *A History of Early Eighteenth Century Drama 1700-1750* (Cambridge U. Press, 1929), p. 120.

[2] *English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century 1700-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 254.

[3] George Lillo, *The London Merchant*, ed. by William H. McBurney (U. of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. xi.

[4] Bartholomew Fair (Bullock's Booth), 26 August 1731; Southwark Fair (Great Theatrical Booth in the Half Moon Inn Yard), 8 September 1731.

[5] *The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1753), v, 339.

Jr., gave Lillo three author's benefits during that summer season, the third of which occasioned comment in the *Daily Post*, 22 July 1731, that "*George Barnwell* was perform'd . . . with great Applause, to a crowded Audience, there being present most of the eminent Merchants of the City of London; they appear'd greatly pleased with the Play and Performance."[6] A final benefit for Lillo and *The London Merchant* was given in the winter season at Drury Lane on 9 December 1731, again "at the Particular Desire of several Persons of Quality and Distinction and Eminent Merchants of the City of London." According to George Winchester Stone, Jr., the drama achieved "230 performances by the end of the century, 38 of which were 'At the Particular Desire of Persons of Quality and Eminent Merchants.'"[7] Cibber, Jr., adds that "It continued a stock-play in Drury Lane Theatre till Mr. Cibber left that house, and went to the Theatre in Covent-Garden. It was often acted in the Christmas and Easter holidays and judged a proper entertainment for the apprentices, *etc.*, as being a more instructive, moral, and cautionary drama, than many pieces that had been usually exhibited on those days, with little but farce and ribaldry to recommend them. . . ."[8]

While entirely unsuspecting of what I believe to be the truth about the *Barnwell* phenomenon, a still earlier critic of our time, Ernest Bernbaum, was close to the true explanation when he wrote: "Perhaps one may, in view of the limited vogue of other domestic tragedies, indulge the suspicion that the frequent performance of *George Barnwell* was encouraged by influential citizens, not because they themselves enjoyed it, but because they thought young people should. Whether or not the popularity of the play was somewhat artificially stimulated, Lillo's achievement was a remarkable one. . . ."[9]

I now suggest that the genesis, instant success, and long life of this tragedy are to be found in the tradition, teachings, and active support of the Ancient Order of Free and Accepted Masons, then embracing for the first time what is now termed "Speculative

[6] *The London Stage, 1729-1747*, ed. by Arthur H. Scouten (Southern Illinois U. Press, 1961), I, 148. I am greatly indebted to Professor Scouten, who read this article in manuscript and offered several valuable suggestions.

[7] *British Dramatists from Dryden to Sheridan*, ed. by George H. Nettleton and Arthur E. Case, rev. by George Winchester Stone, Jr. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), p. 595.

[8] *The Lives of the Poets*, p. 340.

[9] *The Drama of Sensibility* (Boston: Ginn, 1915), p. 158.

Masonry," in contrast to what their fathers had known as "Operative Masonry" in the guild structure of ancient English social life.[10] I am further convinced that this interest and support by Freemasonry prompted the success and influence of Lillo's tragedy on the Continent, especially in Germany and France.

The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons was created on St. John the Baptist's Day, 24 June 1717, at the Goose and Gridiron Alehouse in London, at the north end of St. Paul's. Thus "Speculative Masonry" in England was only fourteen years old when Lillo's *The London Merchant* was produced.[11] Its story is simple but rather breathtaking. A small group of enthusiasts, and especially the Reverend Doctor John Theophilus Desaguliers, Fellow of the Royal Society and friend of its president, the illustrious Sir Isaac Newton, rescued a moribund fraternity headed by the aging Sir Christopher Wren and brought it to preeminence in contemporary social life. The group gave Freemasonry a mysterious and rather awesome public image, a precise program, and astonishing success in attracting members from all stations of society.

In a century when England was undergoing enrichment and expansion of its middle class, members of the royal family and its household, lawyers, physicians, clergymen, writers, artists and theatre people, and especially the English merchant class, were provided a fraternity where all could meet on a democratic level. Men of such diversified social positions were now able for the first time to enjoy a fellowship without class consciousness, slights or affronts, all members united by secret rites encouraging them to work together and allaying any fear of being compromised. Under "Speculative Masonry" lodges of the Grand Lodge of England were composed of simple but intelligent citizens who, as Master Masons, were emerging as a new social class. Bernard Faÿ writes: "The lodge was primarily a new social organ; it worked to re-

[10] See "Speculative Masonry," in Albert G. Mackey, *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences* (Philadelphia: McClure, 1917), pp. 834-36. Mackey writes that "Speculative Masonry (which is but another name for Freemasonry in its modern acceptation) may be briefly defined as the scientific application and the religious consecration of the rules and principles, the language, the implements, and materials of Operative Masonry to the veneration of God, the purification of the heart, and the inculcation of the dogmas of a religious philosophy."

[11] For further study of the historical background of Freemasonry and the London theatres see my article, "White Gloves at Five: Fraternal Patronage of London Theatres in the Eighteenth Century," in *Essays in Neoclassicism in Memory of Charles B. Woods, PQ*, 45 (1966), 270-88.

generate human society without ever forgetting the importance of promoting Masonic society. It professed philanthropy, and practised a new adage that 'charity begins at home.' It upheld, backed, defended and encouraged its members under all circumstances even at the risk of displeasing the powers-that-were. . . ."[12] In a shrewd summation Faÿ adds: "This group of Protestant ministers, cautious Christians, wise deists, enthusiastic Hanoverians and practical men had found the exact formula suited to the moment. In fact, their undertaking progressed much more rapidly than they had expected. They had planned a Masonry for the whole world and for future centuries, but they never anticipated that England and the hour would be so propitious. They wanted to re-establish order and make their ideals prevail in the domain they knew so well—London. . . ."[13]

In such a lodge and such a fellowship I find the genesis of *The London Merchant*. If to the uninitiated Lillo's domestic tragedy appears to be "sheer melodrama," to the Entered Apprentice Mason, the Fellowcraft Mason, and the Master Mason of the eighteenth century it was a *lehrstück*, a sermon, or a type of Masonic lecture. And when George Lillo brought his play to the Cibbers at Drury Lane, Theophilus Cibber must have recognized immediately an opportunity to serve not only his theatre but also "Speculative Masonry." Thorowgood is the Master Mason, and Trueman is his exemplary Entered Apprentice Mason. Thorowgood's daughter, Maria, speaks Masonic teachings inculcated by her father. On the other hand, George Barnwell as the "bad" Entered Apprentice Mason gives lip-service to the teachings of his lodge while falling away from its ideals for the infatuation with Millwood. He becomes that most pitiable wretch—a Masonic brother who has allowed himself to be seduced by "the profane," who needs the help of his Masonic brethren but has placed himself beyond their fraternal assistance by the murder of his uncle.

Masons sitting at this play—and they were to attend with awesome regularity throughout the century—would respond wholeheartedly to the ancient ballad story and applaud the echoes of the lodge room in its sentiments, many of them but thinly disguised paraphrases of Masonic lectures and ritual.

[12] *Revolution and Freemasonry 1660-1800* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1935), p. 126.

[13] Ibid., p. 120.

Consider the opening scenes of Act I in Thorowgood's house in terms of Masonic emphasis upon loyalty to government, integrity in community life, assistance to worthy brethren, and a democratic society in which aristocrat and merchant or tradesman combine to see that government is stable and business flourishing. I quote only pertinent parts of speeches. (For "honest merchants" and "our profession" read "our brethren" and "our fraternity.")[14]

> *Trueman*: Sir, the packet from Genoa is arrived. (*Gives letters.*)
>
> *Thorowgood*: Heaven be praised! *The storm that threatened our royal mistress, pure religion, liberty, and laws, is for a time diverted . . . .*
>
> *Trueman*: *He must be insensible, indeed, who is not affected when the safety of his country is concerned.* Sir, may I know by what means —if I am too bold—
>
> *Thorowgood*: Your curiosity is laudable, and I gratify it with the greatest pleasure because *from thence you may learn how honest merchants, as such, may sometimes contribute to the safety of their country as they do at all times to its happiness; that if hereafter you should be tempted to any action that has the appearance of vice or meanness in it, upon reflecting on the dignity of our profession, you may with honest scorn reject whatever is unworthy of it.*
>
> *Trueman*: *Should Barnwell, or I, who have the benefit of your example, by our ill conduct bring any imputation on that honorable name, we must be left without excuse.*
>
> *Thorowgood*: You compliment, young man. (Trueman *bows respectfully.*) Nay, I'm not offended. *As the name of merchant never degrades a gentleman, so by no means does it exclude him. Only take heed not to purchase the character of complaisant at the expense of your sincerity.*
>
> . . . . . .
>
> *Trueman*: Only to look carefully over the files to see whether there are any tradesmen's bills unpaid and, if there are, to send and discharge 'em. *We must not let artificers lose their time, so useful to the public and their families, in unnecessary attendance.*
>
> . . . . . .
>
> *Maria*: . . . *The man of quality, who chooses to converse with a gentleman and merchant of your worth and character, may confer honor by so doing, but he loses none.*
>
> *Thorowgood*: . . . I remember the time when the company of the greatest and wisest man in the kingdom would have been insipid and tiresome to me if it had deprived me of an opportunity of enjoying your mother's.
>
> *Maria*: Yours no doubt was as agreeable to her, for *generous minds know no pleasure in society but where 'tis mutual.*

In Act II, scenes ii and iii, occur dramatizations of the celebrated Masonic "information" or "secrecy." Any confidence between the brethren, given as a "Masonic secret," becomes sacred

[14] Quotations are from the McBurney edition. To assist non-Masonic readers I have italicized such lines as would appear pertinent to Master Masons. There is little in Freemasonry that is actually secret. Those who wish to check my interpretation are welcome to peruse the 1045 pages in Mackey's *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences*, previously quoted.

and wrapped in ritual. In scene ii Trueman tries for Barnwell's Masonic confidence but is gently but firmly refused.

> *Trueman*: . . . [*Aside.*] Yet, stay. *Perhaps I am too rash and angry when the cause demands compassion.* Some unforeseen calamity may have befallen him too great to bear.
>
> *Barnwell (aside)*: What part am I reduced to act! *'Tis vile and base to move his temper thus, the best of friends and men.*
>
> *Trueman*: I am to blame. Prithee, forgive me, Barnwell. *Try to compose your ruffled mind and let me know the cause that thus transports you from yourself. My friendly counsel may restore your peace.*
>
> *Barnwell*: *All that is possible for man to do for man your generous friendship may effect but, here, even that's in vain.*

In scene iii Thorowgood admonishes his apprentice and lectures the audience with an aside in good Masonic language:

> *Thorowgood*: . . . [*Aside.*] How painful is the sense of guilt to an ingenious mind! Some youthful folly which it were prudent not to inquire into. *When we consider the frail condition of humanity it may raise our pity, not our wonder, that youth should go astray when reason, weak at the best when opposed to inclination, scarce formed and wholly unassisted by experience, faintly contends or willingly becomes the slave of sense.* The state of youth is much to be deplored, and the more so because they see it not, they being then to danger most exposed when they are least prepared for their defense.

Later in the scene Barnwell decides to confess:

> *Barnwell*: Hear me, then, on my knees confess.
>
> *Thorowgood*: I will not hear a syllable more upon the subject. It were not mercy, but cruelty, to hear what must give you such torment to reveal.
>
> *Barnwell*: This generosity amazes and distracts me.
>
> *Thorowgood*: *This remorse makes thee dearer to me than if thou hadst never offended. Whatever is your fault, of this I'm certain, 'twas harder for you to offend than me to pardon.*
>
> [*Exit* Thorowgood.]
>
> *Barnwell*: . . . *The struggle's over and virtue has prevailed. Reason may convince, but gratitude compels.* This unlooked-for generosity has saved me from destruction.

Act III opens with a dialogue between Thorowgood and Trueman which is a thinly disguised Masonic lecture or dialogue if we substitute the word "Masonry" for "merchandise" or "trade."

> *Thorowgood*: Methinks *I would not have you only learn the method of merchandise and practice it hereafter merely as a means of getting wealth. 'Twill be well worth your pains to study it as a science, see how it is founded in reason and the nature of things, how it has promoted humanity as it has opened and yet keeps up an intercourse between nations far remote from one another in situation, customs, and religion; promoting arts, industry, peace, and plenty; by mutual benefits diffusing mutual love from pole to pole.*
>
> *Trueman*: Something of this *I have considered, and hope, by your assistance, to extend my thoughts much farther. I have observed those countries where trade is promoted and encouraged do not make discoveries to destroy but to improve mankind—by love and friendship to tame the fierce and polish the most savage; to teach them the advantages of honest traffic by taking from them, with their own consent, their useless superfluities, and giving them in return what, from their ignorance in manual arts, their situation, or some other accident, they stand in need of.*
>
> *Thorowgood*: 'Tis justly observed. . . . *On every climate and on every country Heaven has bestowed some good peculiar to itself. It is the industrious merchant's business to collect the various blessings of each soil and climate and, with the product of the whole, to enrich his native country. . . . Method in business is the surest guide. He who neglects it frequently stumbles and always wanders perplexed, uncertain, and in danger.*

Barnwell closes Act III with a Masonic couplet:

> *By laws and means well known we stand or fall,*
> *And one eternal rule remains for all.*

From surprising sources—none other than Blunt and Millwood—come true Masonic blasts:

> *Blunt*: . . . He who knows of a murder intended to be committed and does not discover it, in the eye of the law and reason, is a murderer. [Act III, iv.]
>
> . . . . . .
>
> *Millwood*: I am not fool enough to be an atheist, though I have known enough of men's hypocrisy to make a thousand simple women so. *Whatever religion is in itself, as practised by mankind it has caused the evils you say it was designed to cure. War, plague, and famine has not destroyed so many of the human race as this pretended piety has done, and with such barbarous cruelty as if the only way to honor Heaven were to turn the present world into Hell.*
>
> *Thorowgood*: *Truth is truth, though from an enemy and spoke in malice. You bloody, blind, and superstitious bigots, how will you answer this?* [Act IV, xviii.]

It is obvious that at this point Lillo has Thorowgood turn to address his audience. In doing so, he steps out of character and becomes a lecturer or debater. Far from suggesting that the critics may be wrong in citing this as an example of Lillo's crude craftmanship, I agree with them. I only remark that, while the passage may mar the dramaturgy, I am certain that this is good Masonic language or dialogue of the period, and as such it would have been received by the spectators with great applause. Shades of Bertolt Brecht! Lillo and his *George Barnwell* have a teaching mission beyond the usual call of duty.

Thorowgood sums up Masonic teaching in Act V, i, when he offers this advice to the audience:

> . . . Many, less virtuously disposed than Barnwell was, have never fallen in the manner he has done. May not such owe their safety rather to Providence than to themselves? With pity and compassion let us judge him. Great were his faults, but strong was the temptation. Let his

> ruin learn us diffidence, humanity, and circumspection, for we who wonder at his fate—perhaps had we like him been tried, like him we had fallen too. . . .

Having examined the tradition and teachings of Freemasonry as I believe them to be reflected in Lillo's tragedy, it is now necessary to connect all this with the fraternity. The particular lodge was the Bear and Harrow in Butcher Row (now St. George's Lodge and Corner Stone No. 5). Sixty-five members of Bear and Harrow Lodge attended a meeting in 1730 and their names were recorded in the minutes.[15] Of these I find the following names significant:

> Mr. Quinn
> Mr. Cibber Junr
> Mr. Delane
> Mr. Hogarth
> Mr. Giffard
> The Reverend Dr. Desaguliers formerly G. M. [Grand Master].

Excepting Hogarth and Dr. Desaguliers, all were members of London theatre companies. In the season 1730-1731 Quinn was at Lincoln's Inn Fields; Cibber, Jr., was at Drury Lane; Giffard was about to become manager of Goodman's Fields; and Delane was readying himself for a four-year apprenticeship to Giffard and his new company.

At least this much is known about initial performances of *The London Merchant*: Theophilus Cibber accepted it for production in his summer season at Drury Lane; Henry Giffard opened his management of a newly-decorated Goodman's Fields with the new successful play; and soon both Drury Lane and Goodman's Fields were playing it on successive evenings.[16]

Whether George Lillo was a Master Mason is still a matter of conjecture. I have not been able to substantiate his membership from records as yet. But I must concede more than the possibility of his being a member of the craft, since all the parts and most of the lines of *The London Merchant* show familiarity not only with

[15] *Transactions of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge, No. 2076*, reprinted in *Quatuor Coronatorum Antigraphia*, Vol. 10, p. 178. These documents are part of the collection at Freemasons' Hall, United Grand Lodge of England, and were made available to me by the kindness of W. Bro. A. R. Hewitt, Librarian and Curator.

[16] See *The London Stage, 1729-1747*, I, 162 ff., Friday, 15 October, Goodman's Fields, and Saturday, 16 October, Drury Lane; Wednesday, 10 November, Goodman's Fields, and Thursday, 11 November, Drury Lane. On Monday, 27 December, both theatres were playing *The London Merchant* on the same night!

the philosophy of Masonry but also detail its private teachings in veiled language. The remaining alternative is perhaps too obvious to argue and impugns Lillo's great accomplishment. By this I mean any suggestion that Lillo's manuscript was "doctored" or "improved" Masonically after its acceptance for production at Drury Lane. Had such been the case, we may be certain that Cibber, Jr., would have claimed co-authorship. But assuming, as I do, that Lillo was actually a Master Mason, it follows that the fraternity would approve of his tragedy and that Theophilus Cibber would take advantage of his great opportunity.

I will go further and suggest that the entire male cast of the original production of *The London Merchant* was Masonic. We know that William Mills, the original Trueman, was supported in two benefits in 1731 (Drury Lane, 15 March, 30 April), the latter "For the Entertainment of the Grand Master, and the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons. . . ."[17] And it is entirely possible that Roger Bridgewater (Thorowgood), Robert Wetherilt (Blunt), and Roberts (the elder Barnwell) were Masonic brethren.[18] As for the ladies of the cast, Mrs. Cibber and Mrs. Charke were relatives of Masons and presumably could not dispute the views expounded by Lillo's Maria. Only Mrs. Butler, the Millwood, at the present writing, remains without some near relation to the fraternity.

The stage history of *The London Merchant* supports my contention throughout the century. The drama was first performed at Drury Lane on a Tuesday, 22 June 1731. A second performance on Friday, 25 June, was offered at "common prices," and Wednesday, 30 June, was Lillo's first benefit. All this is common practice for a successful play of the period.

Then special advertising began to appear. Performances at Drury Lane on 2, 6, 9 (Lillo's second benefit), 13, and 16 July were advertised as "At the Particular Desire of several Persons of Quality," again a common practice in supporting a drama into "hit" proportions. But now appeared what is surely a unique announcement for Tuesday, 20 July. This was the author's third benefit in almost as many weeks, to be given "At the Particular Desire of several Persons of Distinction and eminent Merchants

[17] *The London Stage, 1729-1747*, I, 134.

[18] For an account of "theatrical lodges" in London, see my article, "White Gloves at Five," p. 281.

of the City of London." Was Freemasonry at work? An advertisement linking "Persons of Distinction" with "eminent Merchants" could only have been Masonic and would have been so recognized by aristocrat and leading tradesman alike. Perhaps the most revealing announcement appears for 9 December 1731 when Drury Lane advertised the drama "At the particular Desire of several Persons of Quality and Distinction, and Eminent Merchants of the City of London." Here we find "Quality," "Distinction," and "Merchants" all in one notice! Diverse classes such as these, so often violent in contention over government policies, taxation, even fashion, could find such a public fellowship only in Masonic circles, where all would be compelled to dwell in harmony.

When the theatres opened in the fall of 1731, we find Henry Giffard, Master Mason, launching his new management at Goodman's Fields Theatre with *The London Merchant* (27 September 1731). Giffard played George Barnwell, his wife played Maria, and Mrs. Roberts (wife of the original elder Barnwell) of Drury Lane played Millwood—and there is no sign of displeasure from the managemnt at Drury Lane. Giffard had given five performances of *The London Merchant* before Drury Lane gave its first of the Lillo play in the regular season on Saturday, 16 October. In fact, on the night preceding Drury Lane's performance Giffard was offering his version as "At the Particular Desire of several eminent Merchants and Citizens." The following evening Drury Lane reverted to a more usual announcement, "At the particular Desire of several Persons of Quality." But the Masonic report had gone out, and an advertisement for a performance at Drury Lane on Thursday, 28 October 1731, provided a kind of capstone for all previous attempts at publicity, "By Their Majesties' Command." After this date we need only note variations of former announcements for most performances of the drama through 1732, when it became a staple in the repertoire. Subsequent performances to the number of 204 were given, 32 of them bearing Masonic advertisement.

William H. McBurney, the latest editor of this domestic tragedy, tries valiantly to explain the phenomenal success it experienced. In many ways he is as close to the truth as was Ernest Bernbaum. After surveying biographical reports and all the public tributes, McBurney satisfies himself that such factors limit Lillo to "a middle-class background, mercantile career, and Dissenting ethics."

He then states that "The causes of the popularity of *The London Merchant* in 1731 are to be found nearer at hand." He thinks that "The basic innovations . . . were those of tone and focus, the serious presentation of material which is exclusively bourgeois and mercantile," the double title indicating "the ideal and the disastrous deviation from this ideal." But, so near the truth, McBurney keeps insisting that *The London Merchant* is "an imitation of the familiar conflicts of love, honor, and friendship to be found in Dryden, Otway, and their successors. In particular, the extravagant friendship of the two apprentices can hardly be explained except in terms of the heroic play."[19]

I take issue with McBurney at this point and suggest that this "extravagant friendship" can easily be explained in terms of the Masonic oath. *The London Merchant,* understood Masonically, has nothing to do with the Heroic Drama. It is domestic tragedy, a genre both Lillo and Cibber, Jr., knew they were launching. It is the only domestic tragedy to succeed prodigiously in the century. Bernbaum comments on the limited vogue of other domestic tragedies, and we need only recall that Lillo's one further attempt at the genre, *Fatal Curiosity,* failed to be taken into the repertoire. Aaron Hill's *The Fatal Extravagance* was far from ideal, and Charles Johnson's *Caelia* was a notable disaster.[20] Only *The London Merchant* survived on the strength and appeal of its Masonic teachings and the vigorous fraternal support it received for over sixty years.

Critics have noted with some surprise references to the success of *The London Merchant* on the Continent. Bonamy Dobrée writes:

> Yet though Lillo's play was popular, being acted to the end of the century, it had no successors; for if the old form of tragedy was played out, the English theatre was not ready for the new for another hundred and fifty years. But on the Continent it became the inspiration of the tragic domestic drama which is the common run from its greatest master, Ibsen, until almost the present day. Its influence became effective first in Germany, Lessing's *Miss Sara Samson* (1755), the fecund parent of German domestic drama, being based on it; but already, in 1748, it had been translated into French, when it received Diderot's always lively and intelligent notice.[21]

We need only to pause long enough to suppose that both Lessing and Diderot were active Freemasons. Records show that Lessing was initiated in a lodge at Hamburg, Germany, and began at once

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[19] *The London Merchant,* pp. xv-xviii.
[20] *The London Stage, 1729-1747,* I, 254-55.
[21] *English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century 1700-1740,* p. 255.

to work for the fraternity.[22] Two of his subsequent works give a profound and comprehensive view of the genius and spirit of Freemasonry in those times. *Ernst und Falk* (1776-1780), five dialogues on Freemasonry, depicts Ernst as the inquirer and Falk the Freemason who gives his friend a philosophical idea of the character, aims, and objects of the fraternity. *Nathan der Weise* (1779) is a noble plea for toleration in the Masonic manner. As for Diderot, Bernard Faÿ writes:

> A distinguished historian has asserted that the great philosophical dictionary, "l'Encyclopédie," was a Masonic adventure, and it seems likely; the first man to suggest the idea . . . was the Masonic leader, Chevalier Ramsay, in his famous speech of March 20, 1737. One of the two booksellers who printed and sold the book was undoubtedly a Freemason; the other may have been one also. A great many Masons are found amongst the editors and collaborators of "l'Encyclopédie." We are not certain if Diderot, the chief editor, was a Mason; but it has never been proved that he was not. At any rate, most of his friends belonged to the Order. The Encyclopedia developed and throve in a Masonic atmosphere, and succeeded owing to Masonic influences.[23]

If George Lillo served the Freemasons and the public by writing *The London Merchant*, the fraternity served Lillo enthusiastically and carried his domestic tragedy to immortality. To paraphrase Bernard Faÿ's statement about the fraternity, no one could have anticipated that *The London Merchant*, the London theatres, and the hour would be so propitious. The brethren, wishing to re-establish order and make their ideals prevail in the domain they knew so well—London—found public means in a dedicated playwright, two actor-managers, a cast drawn from theatrical lodges, and audiences representing a cross-section of London's most substantial citizens, whether of Quality, Distinction, or eminent Merchants of the City.

[22] Albert G. Mackey, p. 527.
[23] *Revolution and Freemasonry 1600-1800*, p. 224.

Melville's Use of Mysticism

By Joel J. Thomas
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Three of Melville's major novels, *Mardi*, *Moby-Dick*, and *Pierre*, display a consistent use of mysticism as a noetic mode. At crucial moments, characters experience trance-states, dreams and visions which form structures within each of the works and which become aids in the reader's general understanding of them. A study of these noetic foci is revealing in terms of at least one general and still controversial area of Melville criticism, as well as in the more finite analysis of the individual works themselves. Each of these novels portrays a hero on a transcendental quest; a study of these visions and trance-states helps in defining the nature of those individual quests. More importantly, with these mystical episodes as a guide, a progressive change in Melville's own attitude toward his quest-heroes, the objects of their respective quests, and, ultimately, toward Transcendentalism itself can be discerned. To regard Melville as a consistent proponent of either Transcendentalism or Naturalism in an analytical evaluation of these novels has, I believe, led some fine critical studies into inconsistency.

A confusion of the terms "Transcendentalism" and "Emersonianism" has marred many discussions of Melville's work and should be removed before the more general discussion begins. Melville was conspicuous for his early hostility toward the Emersonian form of Transcendentalism that was so much a part of the literary life of his day. His correspondence alone is sufficient to demonstrate his belief that the Emersonians were "all cracked right across the brow,"[1] and "Bartleby the Scrivener" and "Cock-a-Doodle-Doo" are as overt burlesques of the practical consequences of the philosophy of Emerson and Thoreau as exist in American literature.[2] At least one important critic has inferred that Melville

[1] Letter to Evert Duyckinck (Mar. 3, 1849); "I could readily see in Emerson . . . a gaping flaw. It was the insinuation that had he lived in those days when the world was made, he might have offered some valuable suggestions. These men are all cracked right across the brow." Quoted in E. M. Metcalf, *Herman Melville, Cycle and Epicycle* (Harvard U. Press, 1953), p. 59.
[2] E. S. Oliver, "'Cock-a-Doodle-Doo' and the Transcendental Hocus-Pocus," *New England Quarterly*, 21 (1948), 204-06.